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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3377

RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ANKARA 002483

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y -- ADDED CAPTION

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAID PHUM PREL TU IZ

SUBJECT: Turks worried about cholera outbreak want to provide assistance

REF: Baghdad 02899

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para 5.

GOT Concerned about Outbreak Spread

¶2. (SBU) On October 1, we met with Ministry of Health Department Head for Communicable Diseases Dr. Mehmet Ali Torunoglu to discuss the cholera outbreak in Northern Iraq (reftel). Torunoglu said the GOT is very concerned that cholera could spread into Turkey from Iraq but so far no cholera cases have been reported in Turkey. Given high volumes of large cross border traffic, the GOT has taken several measures to lower the risk of transmission. They have set up a 24-hour health check point at Habur gate including on-call doctor, nurse, ambulance and equipment. If cholera is suspected, affected persons will be held under observation until a negative result is confirmed. So far, there haven't been any border detentions. Also at the border, the GOT is distributing informational leaflets and prohibiting the importation of water and raw fruits and vegetables. Local hospitals and medical centers in provinces bordering on Iraq have been asked to collect samples from anyone with cholera symptoms. The GOT also has set up local laboratories to analyze samples and has increased the chlorination in city water for these provinces.

¶3. (SBU) Despite these measures, Torunoglu fears that continued hot weather and large border trade will mean the disease likely will lead to infections in Turkey. According to the latest information from the WHO, there have been 11 cholera deaths; 3,000 confirmed cases and 10,000 suspected cases in Iraq, including in Baghdad. Torunoglu complained that WHO reports are not timely nor sufficiently detailed. He asked for U.S. Government assistance in obtaining more information from Iraq.

GOT Assistance to Iraq Slowed by MFA

¶4. (SBU) Torunoglu said the Health Ministry is working through its official government channels to offer assistance to Iraq. He said the Ministry is ready to help now and that urgent action is needed to help contain the outbreak. He expressed frustration with the time delays associated with official channels and asked whether the U.S. government might have a list of what items are urgently needed in Iraq. He said the Ministry is ready to start stockpiling and moving goods to the border in advance of the official request from Iraq for assistance. We understand the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) has begun to provide assistance to the Mosul area. The Health Ministry's offer to join the TRC team was denied by the Turkish Foreign Ministry which is insisting on an official government to government agreement before action is taken.

¶5. (SBU) Action: Embassy would appreciate information from the Department that can be passed to the GOT about Iraq's specific assistance needs to contain cholera. Embassy POC is Rebecca Neff.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The Health Ministry is a professional and well-run agency that did a tremendous job during the Avian Influenza scare last year. We believe they urgently want to help but are being slowed by bureaucracy and MFA policy toward Iraq.

WILSON